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## Role of Media in Transforming Society

Anjali Sharma,\* Ranjana Sharma\*\* and Neha Rawat\*\*\*

Today, media has become as necessary as food and clothing in our daily life. Though it has enormous uses but its basic objectives can be enlisted as to inform, educate, entertain and influence the opinion of the masses. It is playing an outstanding role in strengthening the society. It is widely used to convey messages to build public opinion and awareness due to its inherent ability to reach to a large number of people. Media also has a distinct role to fulfil the educational needs of any society. It has made the today's learner well equipped and teachers dynamic. It is apt to infer that the media has great influence in transforming society as the updates are available at our doorsteps. With the development of the society, we can see the gradual changes in the types of media and their effects on individual's life as well as on it. The literal meaning of media also points towards its characteristic which is 'a carrier' or 'a mode' representing an item specifically designed to reach to a large audience or viewers. This term was first used with the advent of newspapers and magazines. However, with the passage of time, the term broadened to cover the innovations in media namely radio, television, cinema and Internet.

The term Media has been derived from the word Medium, which means to transfer the information from one end to the other (Voakes, 2004). In general, "media" refers to various means of communication. For example television, radio and the newspaper are different types of media. The term can also be used as a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies. Media includes mass media like TV, News channels, Newspapers, Radio, journals, magazines and most importantly internet and email. The sphere of influence of media is increasing day by day as the coverage of a small news article is very wide these days and more importantly in this modern society. "Pen is mightier than Sword"- an old proverb seems to be true even in today's context as the media has powerful role in the modern society. Media plays the role of facilitator of development, disseminator of information and an agent of change. Today, media is considered the fourth pillar

of the state all over the world. More importantly this is very true in the context of the biggest democracy like India. Media is indispensable hand in hand partner of social activist, political leaders and policy makers through which they try to change the waves of society.

Media is everywhere; it has become a part of our daily life. Media plays a dominant role in the learning process also. Media has potential to shape personalities, change the way we perceive and understand the world and our immediate reality. We can realize the power of media in this way that every individual now days is spending every minute with media. One wakes up in the morning with messages on Whatsapp and then throughout the day he shares information through various media of entertainment and education and finally goes to bed again surrounded with some media. Media has become the strongest mean to change the face of the society.

Due to media's powerful influence in fast changing society it is essential to understand it by analysing it, in context of contemporary societal needs. So in this context, it can be broadly classified as social media like Facebook, whatsapp etc., educational media (print and non-print), entertainment media and information media comprising of news channels, literature festivals etc.

### Social Media: New-age Relationship Manager

The first and the most important media today is social media which has come into existence with the advancement of mobile technology and internet in the form of Facebook, twitter, whatsapp, hike and other social networking sites. The foremost exceptional quality of this media is its worldwide network of people sharing information. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (2013) has aptly said about it, "The media space has changed a lot with the emergence of social media. With social media, the public has eyes and ears everywhere. They are not limited to camera crews of a few TV channels". No person of any age is untouched by its reach. People can connect to each other through Facebook from anywhere on planet. It has also contributed towards dissemination of educational material and other information largely. Social messages, videos, pictures, blogs, lectures and proceedings can be shared easily through various social networking sites or applications keeping the people updated on what is happening

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higher education, University Grants Commission (UGC) has started Higher Education Television (HTV) programmes through Doordarshan. In fact, Doordarshan took a revolutionary step on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1984 by introducing countrywide class room programme based upon the syllabus formulated by EMRCs established by various states including Karnataka (Mysore) for higher studies/courses. These programmes are telecast all over India on regular basis.

### **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Programmes**

Lakhs of students from all over country are pursuing their education through distance education from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). To enrich the knowledge base of its students, IGNOU is supplying printed material, audio-video CDs containing syllabus based lessons to the students. On screen lectures delivered by subject experts provides the feel of class room. Moreover, in addition to the TV coaching, print material is also provided to strengthen and expand the knowledge base of students. In this way educational programmes of Doordarshan have become boon for the students.

### **Teachers' Programmes**

In order to make the primary school teachers aware of the innovations in teaching learning processes, management of televised instruction, child psychology, etc., the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) produces programmes for teachers, known as 'Hints for Teachers.'

### **Role of Educational Media in Transforming Society**

To analyse the role of educational media, it is necessary to have a look on its benefits and limitations. It motivates students to be more participative and active in their learning as it facilitates personalised learning. It increases the amount of initial learning and permanency of learning. It presents a large number of information within short time as the learner develops the ability to get quick information. Educational media helps to introduce the topic itself to give an overview of what is going to be taught. It helps to illustrate ideas; facts, principle or a point through real effective concept mapping that was earlier not possible only through chalk board teaching. In short it promotes and appropriately supports learners' diverse learning needs. Educational media has brought and established new

paradigm in the standards of teaching pedagogy. But this media has limitations too. This being exploited and searched for information on Google and other websites service simultaneous seizes and fragments our attention. This can subvert higher order reasoning processes, including the kind of focus concentration and persistence necessary for critical thinking and intellectual development. Some researchers have correlated heavy internet use with greater impulses, less patience, less tenacity and weaker critical thinking skills. Prolonged internet use exposes student to interactive, repetitive and addictive stimuli that produce permanent change in brain stimuli adversely affecting learning.

Apart from advantages and disadvantages, educational media play a vital role in transforming society as it creates a revolution in the world of knowledge and make dissemination of knowledge easier. Now any one can get the knowledge as e-books, e-journals and can learn through e-learning. Education is available through distance and open learning mode which facilitate many people to pursue their studies at their convenience. Educational media is indeed playing a crucial role in producing a knowledgeable society and therefore in true sense can be called a change agent.

### **Entertainment Media: Common Sense Media**

Entertainment media is an eternal media whose purpose is to touch viewer's every domain cognitive, affective and psychomotor. From primitive times humans have recognised their recreational needs. Some earlier means of entertainment have been nautanki, dramas and folk performances. Raj Kapoor's *Teesri Kasam*; a movie based on rural backdrop of India of 1950s also portrayed nautanki as main source of entertainment. Those people who had literary penchant and needed intelligent entertain used to read books, magazines, novels and other literature. Some popular Indian periodic magazines and comic books series for children and women folk are Champak, Nandan, Chanda-Mama, Soviate Nari, Sarita, Mukta. Radio and theatre were most also popular medium of entertainment at that time.

With time television came into picture and the world of entertainment became nearer and wider. Slowly, revolution came in the television world with the coming of satellite technology as the telecast of the programmes broadened to 24x7 from 12-hours a day with endless channels options. The revolution of this media affected the people's social life as they have



become limited to the television world; there are lesser chances of social gatherings where real human communication and connections used to take place. Now real-life social forms of entertainment like *nautanki* have become extinct replaced by virtual world of video chats and long-distance communication. It is now beyond imagination that how people used to drop their work to watch serials like Ramayana and Mahabharata with family taking a retrieve of one hour from their daily routine. Similarly, legendary voice of Amin Sahni heard on radio programmes like Binaca Geetmala had huge craze among people and was frequently discussed in many social gatherings.

The special feature of entertainment media is that it is educationally beneficial for learners of all ages. It is the most interesting one among all because of its psychological basis. It uses projective techniques of psychology where viewers are indirectly influenced to learn something by watching some entertaining programme without even realising its educational benefits. A variety of entertainment exists as theatre, story telling, performances, comedy, dance, music, street performances, fireworks, games and plays, shopping, films and shows. It can again be categorized into print and non-print type. In non-print media there are kid's channels, educational movies, games, cartoons, websites etc. Some of the popular examples of channels touching kid's creative needs on Indian Television are Pogo, Discovery Kids, Zee kids, etc. Then there is non-print entertainment media producing programmes with the consideration of invoking children's cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

### **Role of Entertainment Media in Transforming Society**

Entertainment media's appeal is universal and eternal but there are certain serious considerations attached with it. It is negatively influencing children and young teens' academic skill of attention span, writing skills, homework, verbal communication and critical thinking. It is negatively impacting sex education and orientation of teenagers. It affects the social development of the people their attitude, perception and reactions. It is source of violent scenes and plots depicting directly or indirectly antisocial behaviour leading to instances of aggressive behaviour like hitting and fighting in youth. Here it is to understand that violence can be either directly visible or invisible, such as fighting scenes or women prejudices prevalent in our society. Although there is no real world scenario

where a criminal is directly coming out of a violent movie plot, but audiences are directly or indirectly exposed to the danger of influencing their thoughts negatively. It is essential to create an acceptance by education among people for quality programmes and not for violent and unsuitable programmes. To protect audiences; particularly, young ones, family members must play the significant role to indicate them what to watch or consume on entertainment media with media literacy. However, such process cannot be achieved in discordant family where family member's behaviour is contradictory to their instruction to children. The idea of peace building and proper conflict resolution can be realized from the smallest but most powerful social institute like family.

Internet advancement has further aggravated the problem of media monitoring and censoring which has become herculean task considering internet's penetration to the masses. People can access freely the entertainment media from everywhere in the world. Therefore, it is important concern to supervise the level of media literacy of people in expected areas before establishing the internet connection; otherwise, it may aggravate conflicts and social problems. In this context social responsibility of entertainment media providers also becomes significant. In the words of Justice Markandey Katju (2011), "In this transitional age, the media should help our people to move forward into the modern, scientific age. For this purpose the media should propagate rational and scientific ideas, but instead of doing so a large section of our media propagates superstitions of various kinds." Markandey Katju (2011) also opines "The nation faces a socio-economic crisis. Artists, writers, and media persons must act responsibly and help the people solve their problems. This they can do by focusing on the real issues, which are basically economic, and not by trying to divert the attention of the people from the real issues to non-issues". In spite of these limitations entertainment media is essential as it touches common man's emotions and feelings. It gives relaxation to tired souls of common working class and energizes them for a new day. It caters to interest and hobbies of viewers of all ages directly and indirectly. It has universal appeal and eternal influence on masses.

### **Information Media: Revolutionary Media**

Fourth and final type of media is information media which focuses on disseminating purposeful facts, reports and news. Power of information media can be appropriately explained in these lines by Gandhiji One



of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it, another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects. It is of two types print and non-print. Print media consists of newspapers, motivational and educational books, journals, surveys, magazines etc. Non-print media consist of news channels, conferences, seminars, debates, literature festivals, youth parliaments, rallies, speeches, documentaries, movies and plays etc. Information media has great effect on creating mass opinions about any national or international issues. It can revolutionize a nation's mood. Such is the impact of this media that in recent decades due to mass impact of informational media Indians can make an opinion to bring reforms in Delhi Government and made AAP party of Khejriwal victorious. Similarly nation stood unison against culprit of Nirbhaya and raised voice in the form of rallies, March and protests for punishing Nirbhaya's culprits.

Informational media is revolutionary media as it has the power to change the face of any nation by influencing mindsets of large number of population. Information media promotes good governance. Good governance is not just about government it is also about political parties, Parliament, the judiciary, the media, and civil society. It is about how citizens, leaders and public institutions relate to each other in order to make change happen. Making Governance Work for the Poor: DFID White Paper, 2006 on governance is such an example. According to it Democracy requires that people should have the right to know all the activities of the government, particularly the decisions of the government that affects their life, liberty and property. Information is very vital for people to make decisions regarding their involvement in the State and the civil society. Adequate information helps the citizens to decide sensibly and take the right course of action favourable to them.

### Role of Information Media in Transforming Society

The influence of information media is increasing day by day as it covers small news in broad spectrum. It thus helps people to know what is happening around the world and socialize with the outer world with the values of pluralism. By publicizing information the media also make public services more responsive to the people. Information media is playing a crucial role in protection of civil rights by making people aware of

their rights. It is also making people vigilant on political developments around the world and invoking healthy debates and discussions about crucial social issues like institutional failures, corruption, inefficiency and illegal activities. Thus information media perform the vital task of informing, socializing, communicating and articulating the power of public and preparing them mentally for future social transformations facilitating smooth governance keeping peace and law and order of a land.

### Conclusion

Media has the power to educate people, the good and the bad. Since it affects the eyes, the ears and the mind simultaneously nothing can overcome the influence of the media. The media in the advanced society should perform a noble mission of enlightening people and discouraging sectarian, communal and divisive trends.

We all are diverse in every aspect like our thinking, expression and representation. The concept of inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse are supposed to exhibit the behaviour of inclusion growth of society by their conduct, attitude and expression. The philosophy of inclusion is based on the fact that all the individuals has their own strength and weaknesses and there is need to accept and adapt accordingly if ones want to keep moving ahead by maximizing his/her potential. Inclusion is based on tolerance, pluralism and equality; it has to be absorbed with psyche of the individuality in the sustainable manner.

Media plays a role of facilitator of development and disseminator of information and being change agent. Now a day media is considered as fourth pillar of life in all over the world. The media has a unique feature and play massive role in creating knowledgeable and inclusive society.

The media do not merely have an instrumental function in society but help in promoting right things on right time. The world is changing every step we can't ignored social problems and issues; media helps us to estimate the reality of life and focus on the social matters by highlighting them with pure and real fact. The media is all together has a significant role in moulding good society and act as a best tool in transforming the society. They also shape norms, beliefs and fields of interest in matters such as identity- building, 'regionalization' and the formation of the multicultural society.

(contd. on pg.24)